

● Edinburgh Belle Caroline Graves has made a film showcasing the impact the project is making on women across Scotland. See ctc.org.uk/projects/belles-on-bikes



more healthy and active lifestyle.'

Since they were established in 2014, the Edinburgh, Stirling, Borders, and Moray Belles have run 34 rides, attracted more than 250 registered members, and recruited 11 leaders, who have contributed over 250 volunteer-hours to lead, promote and arrange rides for other women.

Belles on Bikes uses a community development approach, which means that I provide support for women to establish the group they want to develop, rather than prescribing a programme. We're inclusive – men and boys are welcome at the invitation of women, particularly if this support enables a woman to attend, for example, a male tandem pilot for a partially-sighted Belle. The Belles leaders tell me that the peer support and learning, such as opportunities for networking and sharing experiences, are highly valued, as are the training and resources.

'The Edinburgh group is growing organically,' another leader told me. 'There is clearly a need being filled with Belles. We have 500-plus connected on Facebook, 190 or so following on Twitter, and 137 Belles registered on Meetup. Our rides fill quickly and there is no problem attracting participants. The funding has been welcomed. I'm not sure we'd be anything like as confident or successful without the support and services we've received.'

In 2015, CTC hopes to support the network to expand and to co-produce a bespoke Belles Ride Leader Course, to help prepare more women to establish Belles groups across Scotland. ●

If you would like to set up a Belles group in your community in Scotland, email suzanne.forup@ctc.org.uk or tweet [Suzanne @backonmybike](https://twitter.com/Suzanne@backonmybike). See also ctc.org.uk/project/belles-on-bikes

Belles on Bikes

*CTC supports women's cycling groups across Scotland. CTC Development Officer **Suzanne Forup** looks back on a year of cycling, increased confidence, and cake*

Belles on Bikes is a network of women's cycling groups in Scotland, developed and supported by CTC. The project helps women to start cycling together in a friendly, relaxed and inclusive environment. It's been funded by small grants from Cycling Scotland and Community 2014 to cover training, resources and programme materials.

It's just a year since Belles on Bikes expanded from what was a single group in Glasgow. That group, established in 2012, now has over 600 members. Belles groups have since been established with CTC support in Edinburgh, Falkirk, the Scottish Borders, Stirling, and Moray. Women's cycling clubs in Cumbernauld and Inverness have also joined the Belles network. The feedback has been tremendous. Many participants have told me that they've become more confident cyclists, are riding more, have made new friends, and are keen to try a shot at leadership too, because of their involvement with the Belles.

One Belles leader in Stirling told me: 'The rides give the participants a chance to build or regain confidence cycling on the roads. Often their ride with us is the first they've

done in years. For some women, the only other people they have gone out cycling with are their husbands or partners, and they've reported it as not always being a positive experience – for example, being dropped on hills and being left behind! Our rides are relaxed and go on quieter roads. Through their experience with us, women can see that they are capable bike riders.'

As well as enabling women to ride together, Belles on Bikes is creating and supporting opportunities for families to cycle together. One Scottish Borders ride leader said: 'One young mum told me that, after her first Belles ride, she then took her husband and two children (aged 8 and 6) on the same 16-mile trip she'd ridden with us. They had a fabulous afternoon. If more women cycle, then so will more children. That all helps to encourage a

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